BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

The Economy

- **Department store sales in British Columbia and the two territories dropped 6.3% between August 1997 and the same month this year.** New Brunswick (-4.8%) was the only region to record a similarly large decline. Nationally, sales edged up 0.7%, increasing in six of nine regions. The strongest gains were in Saskatchewan (+5.5%) and Alberta (+5.2%). Sales rose only marginally in Ontario (+0.8%), but were up 2.3% in Quebec. Year-to-date, sales were up 0.8% in BC, compared to 7.6% nationally.

  Sales figures have been affected by the recent closure or conversion of several department stores. The number of Canadian department stores decreased by 64 during the five-month period from March to August. Ontario (-27) and BC (-11) accounted for more than half of the closures. *Source: SC, The Daily*

Attendance at Parks & Recreational Sites

- **In August, 5.61 million visits were made to BC's provincial parks, an increase of 1% from the same month last year, when there were 5.53 million visits.** During the first eight months of this year, park usage in BC was 8% higher (20.6 million visits) than in the same period of 1997. The largest increase was in Vancouver Island, where the number of park visits was up 15%, to 5.0 million. In other regions, increases ranged from 4% in Okanagan/Kootenay (4.7 million) to 8% in Northern BC (2.4 million) and Thompson/Cariboo (2.4 million). Most (18.1 million) visits to BC's provincial parks were on day trips, but during the first eight months of this year, 2.5 million parties made use of campground facilities in BC parks.

  Source: Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks data

- **During 1997/98, 1.1 million people visited recreational sites at BC Hydro generating facilities.** This compares to 798,000 visitors five years earlier. In addition to tours of the facilities, amenities at these sites include hiking trails, cycling trails and boat-launching facilities.

  Source: BC Hydro 1998 Report on the Environment

Library Usage

- **British Columbians checked out 44,492,551 items from public libraries in the province last year.** Two out of three British Columbians have library cards, and last year registered users borrowed an average of 18 items each. Public libraries in the province have a total print collection of 10,059,926 volumes, 704,415 of which were added to the system in 1997. Libraries also provide users with 436 internet workstations and 144 public-use computers. Forty-nine libraries in the province have computers for public use and 69 have internet workstations. Libraries are also going on-line: 33 public libraries in BC now have their own websites. *Source: BC Public Libraries Statistics, 1997, Ministry of Municipal Affairs*

Government Spending on Culture

- **Federal, provincial and local governments in British Columbia spent $183 per capita in support of cultural activities in 1996/97.** This was slightly below the national average ($199), but only because federal per capita expenditures in BC ($38) were much lower than in other parts of the country (the Canadian average was $93). The federal government's per capita expenditures were highest in Quebec ($114) and Ontario ($102), where many national cultural institutions are located. Ontario and Quebec also get the lion's share of federal contributions to the CBC.

Survey **Give us your feedback!**

Did you know...?
British Columbians paid just over four million dollars in public library fines in 1997. That averages to nine cents for each item circulated.

In BC, the provincial government spent an average of $68 per person on culture-related activities, while local governments spent $77 per capita. The Canadian averages were $58 and $48, respectively. Local government spending in BC was higher than in any other province, while the provincial government's per capita expenditures were the fifth highest among the provinces.

Source: Statistics Canada

Tourism

- **Canadians and foreigners travelling in Canada spent an estimated $23.1 billion (seasonally adjusted) during the first six months of 1998.** The bulk (40%) of their tourism expenditures were for transportation. They spent $5.1 billion on airline tickets, $2.8 billion on vehicle expenses, and $475 million on vehicle rentals. Bus ($303 million), rail ($109 million) and other types of transportation ($332 million) accounted for smaller shares of total spending. Canadian and foreign tourists also forked over $3.7 billion for food and beverages, $3.2 billion for accommodation and $1.5 billion for recreation and entertainment.

Source: SC, catalogue 13-009-XPB

Y2K

- **In October 1997, while 91% of Canadian businesses were aware of the Year 2000 (Y2K) issue, only 45% had taken any steps to address it.** Just 9% had a formal action plan. By last May, awareness of the Y2K issue had spread to almost every business (99%), and 70% indicated that they had taken some steps to deal with it. However, only 18% had a formal action plan. Fifteen percent of small firms, 37% of medium firms, and 67% of large firms reported having a formal action plan. Almost all of the businesses taking action said they expected to be ready by the turn of the century.

  Fifteen percent of large firms said that they were already Y2K compliant. Another 27% of these firms expected to be ready by the end of 1998, 34% before July 1999 and 15% before the end of 1999. This leaves about 9% of large firms who were either not yet taking steps, or were not sure that they would be ready in time for the next millennium.

  Three percent of firms were planning to hire an estimated 8,000 extra systems workers to fix non-compliant systems. Most of these workers were required by small and medium-sized firms.

Source: SC, Catalogue 61F0057MIE

The Nation

- **The Canadian economy shrank for the fourth consecutive month in July, with real GDP falling 0.3%.** The latest decline, which leaves economic activity 0.7% below its March 1998 peak, was due to widespread weakness among industries. GDP decreased or was flat in six of seven goods-producing industries, partly as a result of labour disputes. The service sector also remained stalled, just barely edging forward (+0.1%) between June and July–marking the third straight month in which this sector has seen little or no growth. Activity in the transportation services industry was down 1.6%, as rail carriers and trucking companies were affected by weakness in manufacturing as well as depressed commodity markets for coal and grains.

Source: Statistics Canada

Wage Polarization

- **Average real earnings have changed little over the 1980s and 1990s, but the earnings of Canadian men with low pay and skill levels have fallen.** Between 1981 and 1995, the real ($1993) earnings of employed men declined 5%. The lowest-paid men saw their earnings drop 32%, while those in the second (-25%) and third (-22%) lowest deciles also experienced major setbacks. In contrast, employed women saw their earnings rise 16% during this period. Women in the lowest decile posted the smallest gain (+10%). The most substantial gains were in the second- and third-lowest deciles, and among the highest income earners. The increase in income was largely due to more hours of work. The male-female wage gap persists, however. In 1995, men in the top decile had average earnings of $78,000, compared to $54,000 for women. In the bottom decile, men earned an average $2,200, while women's earnings averaged $1,500

Source: SC, Catalogue 11-010-XPB

highlights, Issue 98-39
October 2, 1998

Tourism Room Revenue readership survey

BC STATS *Tourism Room Revenue* report is an analytical and statistical look at monthly accommodation room revenue and other relevant measures of tourism activity in BC. The *Tourism Room Revenue* report has undergone several key changes to format and content in the last few months. We need to know if the information and format of this report satisfies your tourism data needs. Please take the time to complete and return the following survey.

1. What kind of organisation do you represent?

- O government
- O hotel industry
- O media
- O consultant
- O tourism association
- O other_____

2. Rate your familiarity with the *Tourism Room Revenue* report

- O very familiar
- O somewhat familiar
- O not familiar

3. How do you normally receive your copy?

- O mail
- O web
- O Infoline (excerpts)
- O internal distribution
- O other_____

4. What do you use *Tourism Room Revenue* report data for?

- O information only
- O planning
- O budgeting
- O other_____

5. How often do you read the report?

- O regularly
- O occasionally
- O infrequently

6. What do you find most or least useful?

Most	Least	
O	O	highlights
O	O	room revenue trends
O	O	traveller entries
O	O	special focus
O	O	data map
O	O	data tables

7. Which of the following is more applicable to your needs?

- O seasonally adjusted data
- O unadjusted data
- O both

8. Which type of data do you use most often?

- O current month data
- O historical time-series data
- O both

9. Would you prefer more or less of the following:

More	Less	
O	O	analysis
O	O	data tables
O	O	text tables
O	O	data maps
O	O	data charts & graphs
O	O	explanatory notes

10. Do you find the current data table format easy to use?

- O yes
- O no

If no, why not?_____

_____

11. Do you subscribe to the *Tourism Room Revenue* report?

- O yes
- O no

12. Any suggestions on how we can improve this report?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please return your completed form by fax to **(250) 387-0380**.

Infoline

October 2, 1998

fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jul 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,014.3	1.3
Canada	30,300.4	1.0
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1997	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,340	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Jul	2,758	-5.8
Merchandise Exports (raw) Jul	2,149	-7.7
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Jul	2,794	0.5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Aug '98	one year ago
BC	110.4	0.4
Canada	108.8	0.8
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Aug '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,040	0.5
Employed - BC	1,864	0.5
Unemployed - BC	176	0.5
		Aug '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.6	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.3	9.0
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Sept 30/98	Oct 1/97
Prime Business Rate	7.25	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.75	5.65
- 5 year	7.15	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Sept 30/98	Oct 1/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5259	1.3788
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6554	0.7253
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Jul '98	one year ago
BC	623.77	0.9
Canada	610.76	1.7

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

We have all heard that **TOURISM** remains one of the bright spots in the BC economy. We know this in part because BC STATS releases a monthly report that provides objective measurements of tourism related activities in BC, some for quite specific locations in the province. While we continuously strive to improve our products, from time-to-time we actively seek readers' input to help direct our efforts.

Today we are asking for your feedback on our ***Tourism Room Revenue*** release. While you may not be familiar with the full report, you may recall reading excerpts here in *Infoline* (issue 98-31, August 7 and issue 98-25, June 26). For a look at the full April 1998 issue, featuring our latest enhancements, click on the "sample report" at:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/pr_tour.htm

If you want to know more about tourism visit our tourism page at:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/bus_stat/tourism.htm

You can get your copy of Tourism Room Revenue by subscribing to the printed release ($60 per year) or by joining the subscriber section of our Internet site ($100 per year; **includes ten other periodicals**).

To subscribe, contact Kris Ovens at (250) 387-0359.

For analysis and technical information, contact Kevin Perrault at (250) 387-0360.

Released this week by BC STATS

- Immigration Highlights, First Half of 1998
- Tourism Room Revenue, June 1998

Next week

- No subscription releases

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